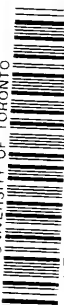


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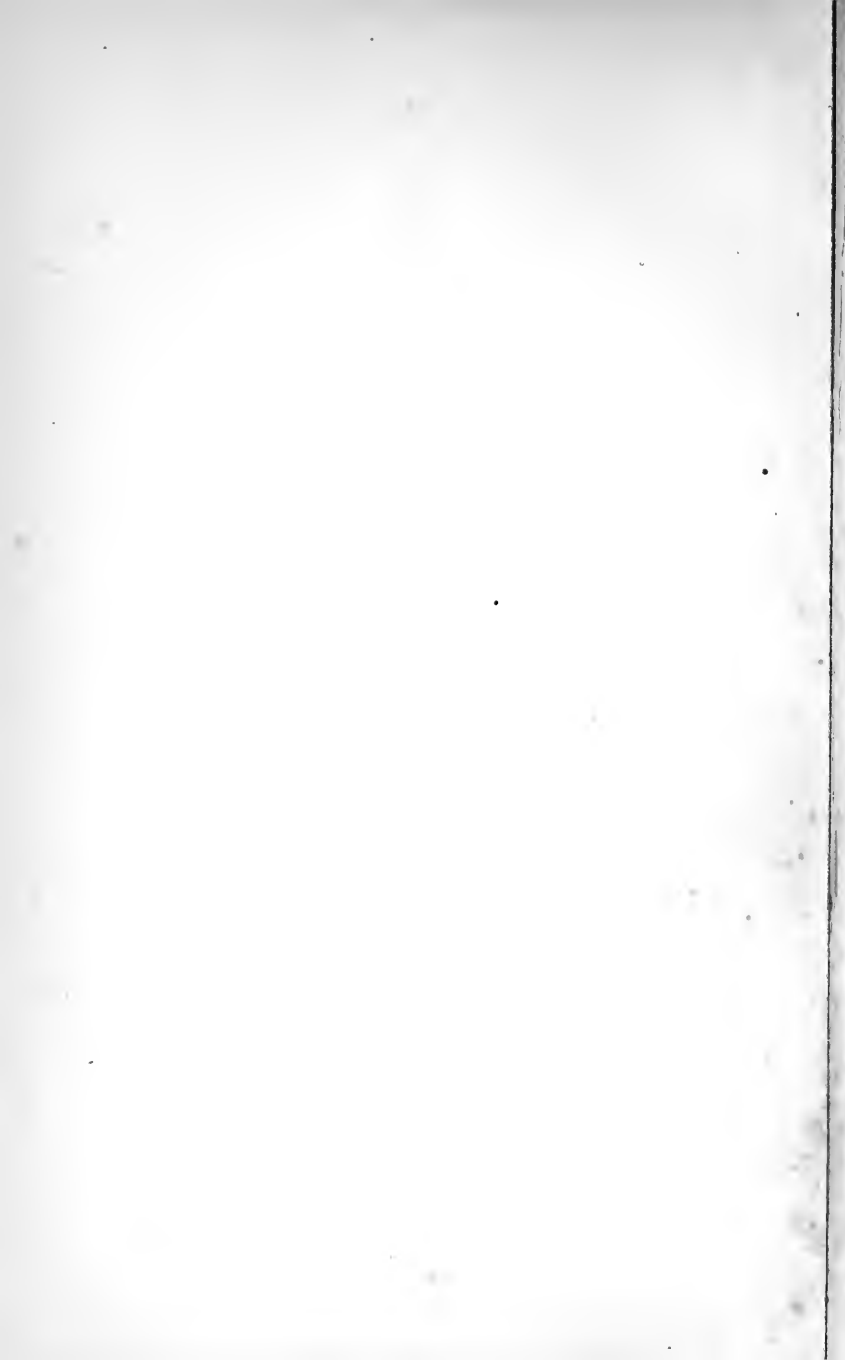
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# DRAMAS IN MINIATURE



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"The perfume of the breath of May  
Had passed into her soul."



~~BC 4000~~

# DRAMAS IN MINIATURE

BY  
MATHILDE BLIND

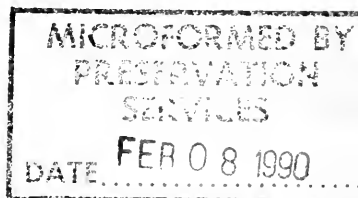


WITH A FRONTISPIECE BY FORD MADOX BROWN

London  
CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1891

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DRAMAS IN MINIATURE.



*THE RUSSIAN STUDENT'S  
TALE.*

THE midnight sun with phantom glare  
Shone on the soundless thoroughfare  
Whose shuttered houses, closed and still,  
Seemed bodies without heart or will ;  
Yea, all the stony city lay  
Impassive in that phantom day,  
As amid livid wastes of sand  
The sphinxes of the desert stand.

\* \* \* \* \*

And we, we two, turned night to day,  
As, whistling many a student's lay,  
We sped along each ghostly street,  
With girls whose lightly tripping feet

Well matched our longer, stronger stride,  
In hurrying to the water-side.  
We took a boat ; each seized an oar,  
And put his will into each stroke,  
Until on either hand the shore  
Slipped backwards, as our voices woke  
Far echoes, mingling like a dream  
With swirl and tumult of the stream.  
On—on—away, beneath the ray  
Of midnight in the mask of day ;  
By great wharves where the masts at peace  
Look like the ocean's barren trees ;  
Past palaces and glimmering towers,  
And gardens fairy-like with flowers,  
And parks of twilight green and closes,  
The very Paradise of roses.  
The waters flow ; on, on we row,  
Now laughing loud, now whispering low ;  
And through the splendour of the white  
Electrically glowing night,



Wind-wafted from some perfumed dell,  
Tumultuously there loudly rose  
Above the Neva's surge and swell,  
With amorous ecstasies and throes,  
And lyric spasms of wildest wail,  
The love-song of a nightingale.

\* \* \* \* \*

I see her still beside me. Yea,  
As if it were but yesterday,  
I see her—see her as she smiled ;  
Her face that of a little child  
For innocent sweetness undefiled ;  
And that pathetic flower-like blue  
Of eyes which, as they looked at you,  
Seemed yet to stab your bosom through.  
I rowed, she steered ; oars dipped and flashed,  
The broadening river roared and splashed,  
So that we hardly seemed to hear  
Our comrades' voices, though so near ;  
Their faces seeming far away,

As still beneath that phantom day  
I looked at her, she smiled at me !  
And then we landed—I and she.

\* \* \* \* \*

There's an old Café in the wood ;  
A students' haunt on summer eves,  
Round which responsive poplar leaves  
Quiver to each æolian mood  
Like some wild harp a poet smites  
On visionary summer nights.  
I ordered supper, took a room  
Green-curtained by the tremulous gloom  
Of those fraternal poplar trees  
Shaking together in the breeze ;  
My pulse, too, like a poplar tree,  
Shook wildly as she smiled at me.  
Eye in eye, and hand in hand,  
Awake amid the slumberous land,  
I told her all my love that night—  
How I had loved her at first sight ;

How I was hers, and seemed to be  
Her own to all eternity.  
And through the splendour of the white  
Electrically glowing night,  
Wind-wafted from some perfumed dell,  
Tumultuously there loudly rose  
Above the Neva's surge and swell,  
With amorous ecstasies and throes,  
And lyric spasms of wildest wail,  
The love-song of a nightingale.

\* \* \* \* \*

I see her still beside me. Yea,  
As if it were but yesterday,  
I hear her tell with cheek aflame  
Her ineradicable shame—  
So sweet a flower in such vile hands!  
Oh, loved and lost beyond recall!  
Like one who hardly understands,  
I heard the story of her fall.  
The odious barter of her youth,

Of beauty, innocence, and truth,  
Of all that honest women hold  
Most sacred—for the sake of gold.  
A weary scampstress, half a child,  
Left unprotected in the street,  
Where, when so hungry, you would meet  
All sorts of tempters that beguiled.  
Oh, infamous and senseless clods,  
Basely to taint so pure a heart,  
And make a maid fit for the gods  
A creature of the common mart !  
She spoke quite simply of things vile—  
Of devils with an angel's face ;  
It seemed the sunshine of her smile  
Must purify the foulest place.  
She told me all—she would be true—  
Told me of things too sad, too bad ;  
And, looking in her eyes' clear blue  
My passion nearly drove me mad !  
I tried to speak, but tried in vain ;

A sob rose to my throat as dry  
As ashes—for between us twain  
A murdered virgin seemed to lie.  
And through the splendour of the white  
Electrically glowing night,  
Wind-wafted from some perfumed dell,  
Tumultuously there loudly rose  
Above the Neva's surge and swell,  
With amorous ecstasies and throes,  
And lyric spasms of wildest wail,  
The love-song of a nightingale.

\* \* \* \* \*

Poor craven creature ! What was I,  
To sit in judgment on her life,  
Who dared not make this child my wife,  
And lift her up to love's own sky ?  
This poor lost child we all—yes, all—  
Had helped to hurry to her fall,  
Making a social leper of  
God's creature consecrate to love.

I looked at her—she smiled no more ;  
She understood it all before  
A syllable had passed my lips ;  
And like a horrible eclipse,  
Which blots the sunlight from the skies,  
A blankness overspread her eyes—  
The blankness as of one who dies.  
I knew how much she loved me—knew  
How pure and passionately true  
Her love for me, which made her tell  
What scorched her like the flames of hell.  
And I, I loved her too, so much,  
So dearly, that I dared not touch  
Her lips that had been kissed in sin ;  
But with a reverential thrill  
I took her work-worn hand and thin,  
And kissed her fingers, showing still  
Where needle-pricks had marred the skin.  
And, ere I knew, a hot tear fell,  
Scalding the place which I had kissed,

As between clenching teeth I hissed  
Our irretrievable farewell.  
And through the smouldering glow of night,  
Mixed with the shining morning light  
Wind-wafted from some perfumed dell,  
Above the Neva's surge and swell,  
With lyric spasms, as from a throat  
Which dying breathes a faltering note,  
There faded o'er the silent vale  
The last sob of a nightingale.

*THE MYSTIC'S VISION.*

## I.

Al! I shall kill myself with dreams!

These dreams that softly lap me round  
Through trance-like hours, in which, meseems,  
That I am swallowed up and drowned;  
Drowned in your love which flows o'er me  
As o'er the seaweed flows the sea.

## II.

In watches of the middle night,  
'Twixt vespers and 'twixt matin bell,  
With rigid arms and straining sight,  
I wait within my narrow cell;  
With muttered prayers, suspended will,  
I wait your advent—statue-still.



III.

Across the Convent garden walls  
The wind blows from the silver seas ;  
Black shadow of the cypress falls  
Between the moon-meshed olive trees ;  
Sleep-walking from their golden bowers,  
Flit disembodied orange flowers.

IV.

And in God's consecrated house,  
All motionless from head to feet,  
My heart awaits her heavenly Spouse,  
As white I lie on my white sheet ;  
With body lulled and soul awake,  
I watch in anguish for your sake.

V.

And suddenly, across the gloom,  
The naked moonlight sharply swings ;

A Presence stirs within the room,  
A breath of flowers and hovering wings :  
Your Presence without form and void,  
Beyond all earthly joys enjoyed.

## VI.

My heart is hushed, my tongue is mute,  
My life is centred in your will ;  
You play upon me like a lute  
Which answers to its master's skill,  
Till passionately vibrating,  
Each nerve becomes a throbbing string.

## VII.

Oh, incommunicably sweet !  
No longer aching and apart,  
As rain upon the tender wheat,  
You pour upon my thirsty heart ;  
As scent is bound up in the rose,  
Your love within my bosom glows.

VIII.

Unseen, untouched, unheard, unknown,  
You take possession of your bride ;  
I lose myself to live alone  
In you, who once were crucified  
For me, that now would die in you,  
As in the sun a drop of dew.

IX.

Fish may not perish in the deep,  
Nor sparrows fall through yielding air,  
Pure gold in hottest flame will keep ;  
How should I fail and falter where  
You are, O Lord, in whose control  
For ever lies my living soul ?

X.

Ay, break through every wall of sense,  
And pierce my flesh as nails did pierce

Your bleeding limbs in anguish tense,  
And torture me with bliss so fierce,  
That self dies out, as die it must,  
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

## XI.

Thus let me die, so loved and lost,  
Annihilated in my dreams !  
Nor force me, an unwilling ghost,  
To face the loud day's brutal beams ;  
The noisy world's inanities,  
All vanity of vanities.

*THE MESSAGE.*

FROM side to side the sufferer tossed  
    With quick impatient sighs ;  
Her face was bitten as by frost,  
The look as of one hunted crossed  
    The fever of her eyes.

All seared she seemed with life and woe,  
    Yet scarcely could have told  
More than a score of springs or so ;  
Her hair had girlhood's morning glow,  
    And yet her mouth looked old.

Not long for her the sun would rise,  
    Nor that young slip of moon,

Wading through London's smoky skies,  
Would dwindling meet those dwindling eyes,  
Ere May was merged in June.

May was it somewhere? Who, alas!

Could fancy it was May?

For here, instead of meadow grass,  
You saw, through naked panes of glass,  
Bare walls of whitish gray.

Instead of songs, where in the quick  
Leaves hide the blackbirds' nests,  
You heard the moaning of the sick,  
And tortured breathings harsh and thick  
Drawn from their labouring chests.

She muttered, "What's the odds to me?"

With an old cynic's sneer;

And looking up, cried mockingly,

"I hate you, nurse! Why, can't you see  
You'll make no convert here?"

And then she shook her fist at Heaven,

And broke into a laugh !

Yes, though her sins were seven times seven,

Let others pray to be forgiven—

She scorned such canting chaff.

Oh, it was dreadful, sir ! Far worse

In one so young and fair ;

Sometimes she'd scoff and swear and curse ;

Call me bad names, and vow each nurse

A fool for being there.

And then she'd fall back on her bed,

And many a weary hour

Would lie as rigid as one dead ;

Her white throat with the golden head

Like some torn lily flower.

We could do nothing, one and all

How much we might beseech ;

Her girlish blood had turned to gall :

Far lower than her body's fall

Her soul had sunk from reach.

Her soul had sunk into a slough

Of evil past repair.

The world had been against her ; now

Nothing in heaven or earth should bow

Her stubborn knees in prayer.

Yet I felt sorry all the same,

And sometimes, when she slept,

With head and hands as hot as flame,

I watched beside her, half in shame,

Smoothed her bright hair and wept.

To die like this—'twas awful, sir !

To know I prayed in vain ;

And hear her mock me, and aver

That if her life came back to her

She'd live her life again.



Was she a wicked girl? What then?

She didn't care a pin!

She was not worse than all those men

Who looked so shocked in public, when

They made and shared her sin.

"Shut up, nurse, do! Your sermons pall;

Why can't you let me be?

Instead of worrying o'er my fall,

I wish, just wish, you sisters all

Turned to the likes of me."

I shuddered! I could bear no more,

And left her to her fate;

She was too cankered at the core;

Her heart was like a bolted door,

Where Love had knocked too late.

I left her in her savage spleen,

And hoarsely heard her shout,

“What does the cursed sunlight mean  
By shining in upon this scene?  
Oh, shut the sunlight out!”

Sighing, I went my round once more,  
Full heavy for her sin;  
Just as Big Ben was striking four,  
The sun streamed through the open door,  
As a young girl came in.

She held a basket full of flowers—  
Cowslip and columbine;  
A lilac bunch from rustic bowers,  
Strong-scented after morning showers,  
Smelt like some cordial wine.

There, too, peeped Robin-in-the-hedge,  
There daisies pearled with dew,  
Wild parsley from the meadow's edge,  
Sweet-william and the purple vetch,  
And hyacinth's heavenly blue.

But best of all the spring's array,  
    Green boughs of milk-white thorn ;  
Their petals on each perfumed spray  
Looked like the wedding gift of May  
    On nature's marriage morn.

And she who bore those gifts of grace  
    To our poor patients there,  
Passed like a sunbeam through the place :  
Dull eyes grew brighter for her face,  
    Angelically fair.

She went the round with elf-like tread,  
    And with kind words of cheer,  
Soothing as balm of Gilead,  
Laid wild flowers on each patient's bed,  
    And made the flowers more dear.

At last she came where Nellie Dean  
    Still moaned and tossed about—

“What does the cursed sunlight mean  
By shining in upon this scene ?

Will no one shut it out ?”

And then she swore with rage and pain,  
And moaning tried to rise ;  
It seemed her ugly words must stain  
The child who stood with heart astrain,  
And large blue listening eyes.

Her fair face did not blush or bleach,  
She did not shrink away ;  
Alas! she was beyond the reach  
Of sweet or bitter human speech—  
Deaf as the flowers of May.

Only her listening eyes could hear  
That hardening in despair,  
Which made that other girl, so near  
In age to her, a thing to fear  
Like fever-tainted air.

She took green boughs of milk-white thorn  
And laid them on the sheet,  
Whispering appealingly, "Don't scorn  
My flowers! I think, when one's forlorn,  
They're like a message, Sweet."

How heavenly fresh those blossoms smelt,  
Like showers on thirsty ground!  
The sick girl frowned as if repelled,  
And with hot hands began to pelt  
And fling them all around.

But then some influence seemed to stay  
Her hands with calm control;  
Her stormy passion cleared away,  
The perfume of the breath of May  
Had passed into her soul.

A nerve of memory had been thrilled,  
And, pushing back her hair,

She stretched out hungry arms half filled  
With flower and leaf, and panting shrilled,  
“Where are you, mother, where?”

And then her eyes shone darkly bright  
Through childhood in a mist,  
As if she suddenly caught sight  
Of some one hidden in the light  
And waited to be kissed.

“Oh, mother dear!” we heard her moan,  
“Have you not gone away?”  
I dreamed, dear mother, you had gone,  
And left me in the world alone,  
In the wild world astray.

“It was a dream; I’m home again!”  
I hear the ivy-leaves  
Tap-tapping on the leaded pane!  
Oh, listen! how the laughing rain  
Runs from our cottage eaves!

“How very sweet the things do smell!

How bright our pewter shines!

I am at home; I feel so well:

I think I hear the evening bell

Above our nodding pines.

“The firelight glows upon the brick,

And pales the rising moon;

And when your needles flash and click,

My heart, my heart, that felt so sick,

Throbs like a hive in June.

“If only father would not stay

And gossip o’er his brew;

Then, reeling homewards, lose his way,

Come staggering in at break of day

And beat you black and blue!

“Yet he can be as good as gold,

When mindful of the farm,

He tills the field and tends the fold :  
But never fear ; when I'm grown old  
I'll keep him out of harm.

“ And then we'll be as happy here  
As kings upon their throne !  
I dreamed you'd left me, mother dear ;  
That you lay dead this many a year  
Beneath the churchyard stone.

“ Mother, I sought you far and wide,  
And ever in my dream,  
Just out of reach you seemed to hide ;  
I ran along the streets and cried,  
' Where are you, mother, where ? '

“ Through never-ending streets in fear  
I ran and ran forlorn ;  
And through the twilight yellow-drear  
I saw blurred masks of loafers leer,  
And point at me in scorn.



“ How tired, how deadly tired, I got ;  
    I ached through all my bones !  
The lamplight grew one quivering blot,  
And like one rooted to the spot,  
    I dropped upon the stones.

“ A hard bed make the stones and cold,  
    The mist a wet, wet sheet ;  
And in the mud, like molten gold,  
The snaky lamplight blinking rolled  
    Like guineas at my feet.

“ Surely there were no mothers when  
    A voice hissed in my ear,  
‘ A sovereign ! Quick ! Come on ! ’—and then  
A knowing leer ! There were but men,  
    And not a creature near.

“ I went—I could not help it. Oh,  
    I didn’t want to die !

With now a kiss and now a blow,  
Strange men would come, strange men would go ;  
I didn't care—not I.

“ Sometimes my life was like a tale  
Read in a story-book ;  
Our blazing nights turned daylight pale,  
Champagne would fizz like ginger-ale,  
Red wine flow like a brook.

“ Then like a vane my dream would veer :  
I walked the street again ;  
And through the twilight yellow-drear  
Blurred clouds of faces seemed to peer,  
And drift across the rain.”

She started with a piercing scream  
And wildly rolling eye :  
“ Ah me ! it was no evil dream  
To pass with the first market-team—  
That thing of shame am I.

“Where were you that you could not come ?

Were you so far above—

Far as the moon above a slum ?

Yet, mother, you were all the sum

I had of human love.

“Ah yes ! you’ve sent this branch of May,

A fair light from the past.

The town is dark—I went astray.

Forgive me, mother ! Lead the way ;

I’m going home at last.”

In eager haste she tried to rise,

And struggled up in bed,

With luminous, transfigured eyes,

As if they glassed the opening skies,

Fell back, sir, and was dead.

*A MOTHER'S DREAM.*

## I.

THE snow was falling thick and fast  
On Christmas Eve ;  
Across the heath the distant blast  
Wailed wildly like a soul in grief,  
A waste soul or a windy leaf  
Whirled round and round without reprieve,  
And lost at last.

## II.

Lisa woke shivering from her sleep  
At break of day,  
And felt her flesh begin to creep.

“My child, my child!” she cried; “now may  
Our blessed Lord, whose hand doth stay  
The wild-fowl on their trackless way,  
Thee guard and keep.”

III.

“Dreams! dreams!” she to herself did say,  
And shook with fright.  
“I saw her plainly where I lay  
Fly past me like a flash of light;  
Fly out into the wintry night,  
Out in the snow as snowy white,  
Far, far away.

IV.

“Her cage hung empty just above  
Your chair, *ma mie*;  
Empty as is my heart of love

Since you, my child, dwell far from me—  
Dwell in the convent over sea ;  
All of you left to love Marie,  
Your darling dove."

## V.

Hark to that fond, familiar coo !  
Oh, joy untold !  
It falls upon her heart like dew.  
There safely perching as of old,  
The dove is calling through the cold  
And ghastly dawn o'er wood and wold,  
"Coo-whoo ! Coo-whoo !"

## VI.

The snow fell softly, flake by flake,  
This Christmas Day,  
And whitened every bush and brake ;

And o'er the hills so ashen gray  
The wind was wailing far away,  
Was wailing like a child astray  
Whose heart must break.

VII.

"I miss my child," she wailed ; " I miss  
Her everywhere !  
That's why I have such dreams as this.  
I miss her step upon the stair,  
I miss her laughter in the air,  
I miss her bonnie face and hair,  
And oh—her kiss !

VIII.

"Christmas ! Last Christmas, oh how fleet,  
With lark-like trill,  
She danced about on fairy feet !

Her eyes clear as a mountain rill,  
Where the blue sky is lingering still ;  
Her rosebud lips the dove would bill  
For something sweet.

## IX.

“ My dove ! my dear ! my undefiled !  
Oh, heavy doom !  
My life has left me with the child.  
She was a sunbeam in my room,  
She was a rainbow on the gloom,  
She was the wild rose on a tomb  
Where weeds run wild.

## X.

“ And yet—’tis better thus ! ’Tis best,  
They tell me so.  
Yes, though my heart is like a nest,



Whence all the little birds did go—  
An empty nest that's full of snow—  
Let me take all the wail and woe,  
So she be blest.

XI.

“Let me take all the sin and shame,  
And weep for two,  
That she may bear no breath of blame.  
‘Sin—sin!’ they say; what sin had you,  
Pure as the dawn upon the dew?  
Child—robbed of a child's rightful due,  
Her father's name.

XII.

“I gave her life to live forlorn!  
Oh, let that day  
Be darkness wherein I was born!

Let not God light it, let no ray  
Shine on it; let it turn away  
Its face, because my sin must weigh  
Her down with shame.

## XIII.

“I? I? Was I the sinner? I,  
Not *he*, they say,  
Who told me, looking eye in eye,  
We’d wed far North where grand and gray  
His fair ancestral castle lay,  
Amid the woods of Darnaway—  
And told a lie.

## XIV.

“But I was young; and in my youth  
I simply thought  
That English gentlemen spoke truth,

Even to a Norman maid, who wrought  
The blush-rose shells the tide had brought  
To fairy toys which children bought  
Before my booth.

XV.

“ ‘Those fairy fingers,’ he would say,  
‘With shell-pink nails,  
Shall shame the pearls of Darnaway!’  
And in his yacht with swelling sails  
We flew before the favouring gales,  
Where leagues on leagues his woods and vales  
Stretched dim and gray.

XVI.

“Grim rose his castle o’er the wood;  
Its hoary halls  
Frowned o’er the Findhorn’s roaring flood;

Where, winged with spray and water-galls,  
The headlong torrent leaps and falls  
In thunder through its tunnelled walls,  
    Streaked as with blood."

## XVII.

It all came back in one wild flash  
    Of cruel light,  
And memory smote her like a lash :—  
The foolish trust, the fond delight,  
The helpless rage, the fevered flight,  
The feet that dragged on through the night,  
    The torrent's splash.

## XVIII.

The long, long sickness bred of lies  
    And lost belief ;  
The short, sharp pangs and shuddering sighs ;

The new-born babe, that in her grief  
Bore her wrecked spirit such relief  
As the dove-carried olive-leaf  
To Noah's eyes.

XIX.

It all came back, and lit her soul  
With lurid flame ;  
How she—she—she—from whom he stole  
Her virgin love and honest name—  
Must, for the ailing child's sake, tame  
Her pride, and take—oh, shame of shame !—  
His lordship's dole.

XX.

Like one whom grief hath driven wild,  
She cried again,  
“ My snowdrop shall not be defiled,

Nor catch the faintest soil or stain,  
Reared in the shadow of my pain !  
How should a guilty mother train  
A guiltless child ?

## XXI.

“ You shall be spotless, you ! ” said she,  
“ Whate’er my woe ;  
Even as the snow on yonder lea.  
You shall be spotless ! ” Faint and low,  
The wind in dying seemed to blow,  
To breathe across the hills of snow,  
“ Marie ! Marie ! ”

## XXII.

A voice was calling far away,  
O’er fields and fords,  
Across the Channel veiled and gray ;

A voice was calling without words,  
Touching her nature's deepest chords ;  
Drawing her, drawing her as with cords —  
She might not stay.

XXIII.

Uprose the sun and still and round,  
Shorn of his heat,  
Glared bloodshot o'er the frosty ground,  
As down the shuttered village street  
Fast, fast walked Lisa, and her feet  
Left black tracks in earth's winding-sheet  
And made no sound.

XXIV.

Then on, on, by the iron way—  
With whistling scream—  
Piercing hard rocks like potter's clay,

She flashed as in a shifting dream  
Through flying town, o'er flowing stream,  
Borne on by mighty wings of steam,  
Away, away.

## XXV.

A sound of wind, and in the air  
The sea-gull's screech,  
And waves lap-lapping everywhere ;  
A rush of ropes and volleyed speech,  
And white cliffs sinking out of reach,  
Then rising on the rival beach,  
Boulogne-sur-Mer.

## XXVI.

Above the ramparts on the hill,  
Whence like a chart  
It saw the low land spreading chill,



Within its cloistered walls apart  
The Convent of the Sacred Heart  
Rose o'er the noise of street and mart,  
Serenely still.

## XXVII.

Above the unquiet sea it rose,  
A quiet nest,  
Severed from earthly wants and woes.  
There might the weary find his rest ;  
There might the pilgrim cease his quest ;  
There might the soul with guilt oppressed  
Implore repose.

## XXVIII.

The day was done, the sun dropped low  
Behind the mill  
That swung within its blood-red glow ;

And up the street and up the hill  
Lisa walked fast and faster still,  
Her sable shadow lengthening chill  
Across the snow.

## XXIX.

Hark ! heavenly clear, with holy swell,  
She hears elate  
The greeting of the vesper bell,  
And, knocking at the convent gate,  
Sighs, " Here she prays God early and late ;  
Walled in from love, walled in from hate ;  
All's well ! All's well ! "

## XXX.

A sweat broke from her every pore,  
And yet she smiled,  
As, stumbling through the clanging door,

She faced a nun of aspect mild.  
Like some starved wolf's her eyes gleamed wild :  
" My child ! " she gasped ; " I want my child."  
And nothing more.

XXXI.

The nun looked at her, shocked to see  
The violent sway  
Of love's unbridled agony ;  
And calmly queried on the way,  
" Your child, Madame ? What child, I pray ? "  
Still, still the mother could but say,  
" Marie ! Marie ! "

XXXII.

The nun in silence bowed her head,  
And then aloud,  
" Christ Jesus knows our needs," she said.

“Madame, far from the sinful crowd,  
The maiden to the Lord you vowed ;  
There is no safeguard like a shroud—  
Your child is dead.

## XXXIII.

“Upon the night Christ saw the light  
She passed away,  
As snow will when the sun shines bright.  
We heard her moaning where she lay,  
‘Come, mother, come, while yet you may ;’  
Then like a dove, at break of day,  
Her soul took flight.”

## XXXIV.

As from a blow the mother fell,  
No moan made she ;  
They bore her to the little cell :

There in her coffin lay Marie,  
Spotless as snow upon the lea,  
Beautiful exceedingly :

All's well ! All's well !

*A CARNIVAL EPISODE.*

NICE, '87.

## I.

WE two there together alone in the night,  
Where its shadow unconsciously bound us ;  
My beautiful lady all shrouded in white,  
She and I looking down from the balcony's height  
On the maskers below in the flickering light,  
As they revelled and rioted round us.

## II.

Such a rush, such a rage, and a rapture of life  
Such shouts of delight and of laughter,

On the quays that I watched with the General's  
wife ;

Such a merry-go-reeling of figures was rife,  
Turning round to the tune of gay fiddle and fife,  
As if never a morning came after.

III.

The houses had emptied themselves in the streets,  
Where the maskers bombarded each other  
With a shower of confetti and hailstorm of  
sweets

Till the pavements were turning the colour of  
sheets ;

Where a prince will crack jokes with a pauper he  
meets,

For the time like a man and a brother.

IV.

The Carnival frolic was now at its height ;  
The whole population in motion

Stood watching the swift constellations of light  
That crackling flashed up on their arrowy flight,  
Then spreading their fairy-like fires on the night,  
Fell in luminous rain on the ocean.

## V.

And now and again the quick dazzle would flare,  
Glowing red on black masks and white dresses.  
We two there together drew back from the glare ;  
Drew in to the room, and her hood unaware  
Fell back from the plaits of her opulent hair,  
That uncoiled the brown snakes of its tresses.

## VI.

How fatally fair was my lady, my queen,  
As that wild light fell round her in flashes ;  
How fatally fair with that mutinous mien,  
And those velvety hands all alive with the sheen  
Of her rings, and her eyes that were narrowed  
between  
Heavy lids darkly laced with long lashes !



VII.

Almost I hated her beauty ! The air

I was breathing seemed steeped in her presence.  
How maddening that waltz was ! Ah, how came

I there

Alone with that woman so fatally fair,

With the scent of her garments, the smell of her  
hair,

Passing into my blood like an essence ?

VIII.

Her eyes seemed to pluck at the roots of my  
heart,

And to put all my blood in a fever ;

My soul was on fire, my veins seemed to start,

To hold her, to fold her but once to my heart,

I'd have willingly bared my broad chest to the  
dart,

And been killed, ay, and damned too for ever.

## IX.

I forgot, I forgot !—oh, disloyal, abhorred,  
With the spell of her eyes on my eyes—  
That her husband, the man of all men I adored,  
Might be fighting for us at the point of the sword ;  
Might be killing or killed by an African horde,  
Afar beneath African skies.

## X.

I forgot—nay, I cared not ! What cared I to-night  
For aught but my lady, my love,  
As she toyed with her mask in the flickering light,  
Then suddenly dropped it, perchance, at the sight  
Of my passion now reaching its uttermost height,  
As a tide with the full moon above !

## XI.

Yet I knew, though I loved her so madly, I knew  
She was only just playing her game.

She would toy with my heart all the Carnival  
through ;  
She would turn to a traitor a man who was true ;  
She would drain him of love and then break him  
in two,  
And wash her white hands of his shame.

## XII.

Yet beware, O my beautiful lady, beware !  
You must cure me of love or else kill.  
That fire burns longest that's slowest to flare :  
My love is a force that will force you to care ;  
Nay, I'll strangle us both in the ropes of your  
hair  
Should you dream you can drop me at will.

## XIII.

And then—how I know not—delirious delight !  
Her lips were pressed close upon mine ;

My arms clung about her as when in affright  
Wrecked men cling to spars in a tempest at  
    night ;  
So madly I clung to her, crushed her with might  
    To my heart which her heart made divine.

## XIV.

Oh, merciful Heavens ! What drove us apart  
    With a shudder of sundering lives ?  
Oh, was it the throb of my passionate heart  
That made the doors tremble, the windows to  
    start ;  
Or was it my lady just playing her part,  
    Most indignant, most outraged of wives ?

## XV.

She was white as the chalk in the streets—was she  
    fain  
To turn on me now with a sneer ?

All the blood in my body surged up to my  
brain,  
And my heart seemed half bursting with passion  
and pain,  
As I seized her slim hands—but I dropped them  
again!  
Ah! treason is mother to fear.

## XVI.

Had it come upon us at that magical hour,  
The judgment of God the Most High?  
The floor 'gan to heave and the ceiling to lower,  
The dead walls to start with malevolent power,  
Till your hair seemed to rise and your spirit to  
cover,  
As the very stones shook with a sigh.

## XVII.

“With you in my arms let the world crack asunder;  
Let us die, love, together!” I cried.

Then, then with a clatter and boom as of thunder,  
A beam crashed between us and drove us asunder,  
And all things rocked round us, above us and  
under,  
Like a boat that is rocked on a tide.

## XVIII.

She sprang like a greyhound—no greyhound more  
fleet—  
And ran down the staircase in motion ;  
And blindly I followed her into the street,  
All choked up with people in panic retreat  
From the houses that scattered their plaster like  
sleet  
On the crowd in bewildered commotion.

## XIX.

Black masks and white dominoes, hale men and  
dying,  
Scared women that shook as with fever

Poor babes in their bedgowns all piteously crying,  
Tiles hurled from the housetops—all flying, all  
flying,  
As I, wild with passion, implored her with sighing  
To fly with me now and for ever.

## XX.

“Go, go!” and she waved me away as she spoke,  
Carried on by the crowd like a feather ;  
“You forget that it was but a Carnival joke.  
Now blest be the terrible earthquake that broke  
In between you and me, and has saved at a stroke  
Us two in the night there together.”

*THE BATTLE OF FLOWERS.*

## I.

THE battle raged, no blood was spilled,  
Though missiles flew in showers ;  
Hard though they hit, they never killed  
Or maimed the merry throwers :  
Or if they killed, those wingèd darts,  
They killed but unprotected hearts ;  
For flowers from flower-like hands can slay  
Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

## II.

Like humming-birds upon the breeze  
So swiftly shot the posies ;  
Glory of red anemones,  
Pink buds of curled-up roses,



Lilacs and lilies of the vale ;  
Yea, every flower that scents the gale  
Yielded up incense to its day,  
    Jeanné Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

## III.

How gallantly along the course,  
    Stepping with conscious glances,  
Each flower-decked, gaily harnessed horse,  
    In rank and file advances !  
Even as green boughs and daisy-chains  
Enwreath their bits and bridle-reins,  
Bright pleasure hides black grief away  
    Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

## IV.

The people humming like a hive,  
    Swarm closely pressed together,  
To watch high fashion's crowded drive  
    With flirt of fan and feather ;

And nosegays thrown up high in air,  
Now hitting gray, now golden hair,  
Now deftly caught upon their way,  
Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

## V.

And past the eager jostling crowd,  
Watching their guests from far lands,  
Gigs flash by in a violet cloud,  
And drags with rose-red garlands ;  
There meet crowned heads from many zones,  
And princes who have lost their thrones,  
With gifts from Ind and far Cathay,  
Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

## VI.

Ah, who shall bear away the prize  
In this bewitching battle,  
Where shafts are hurled from brightest eyes,  
And Cupid's arrows rattle ;

In that fair fight where flowers alone  
By fairer flowers are overthrown ?  
Who shall be victor in this fray ?  
    Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

## VII.

And people bet with buzz of tongue  
    As the gay pageant passes ;  
Now runs a murmur through the throng  
    And stirs the thrilling masses.  
All heads are turned, all necks astrain,  
As through the thickening floral rain,  
“Look ! look ! She comes !” you hear them say—  
    Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

## VIII.

No turn-out in that festive throng  
    Is half so bright and airy ;  
Your cream-white ponies prance along  
    As if they drew a fairy ;

They step along with heads held high,  
And favours blue to match the sky :  
They know theirs is the winning way,  
Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

## IX.

A queen in exile might you be,  
Or leader of the fashion ?  
Some Jenny Lind from over sea  
Melting all hearts with passion ?  
Some tragic Muse whose mighty spell  
Unlocks the gates of heaven and hell ?  
What sceptre is it that you sway ?  
Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

## X.

All by yourself in spotless white,  
You sit there in your glory ;  
Your black eyes scintillate with light—  
Eyes that may hide a story.

In spotless white with ribbons blue,  
You look fresh from a bath of dew  
That sparkles in the rising day,  
Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

## XI.

Triumphant—without shame or fear—  
You air a thousand graces ;  
Though women turn when you appear  
With cold, averted faces ;  
Though men at sight of you will stop,  
As if they looked into a shop ;  
Shall both for this not doubly pay ?  
Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

## XII.

And with a smile upon your lips,  
Perhaps a shade too rosy,  
You shake two dainty finger-tips  
And lightly fling a posy :

So might a high-born dame perchance,  
In days of tourneys and romance,  
Have flung her glove into the fray,  
Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

## XIII.

As with that little careless sign  
You fling your bouquet lightly,  
Three graybeards, flushing as with wine,  
Lift hats and bow politely ;  
And one, the grandest of the three,  
Stoops low with stiff, rheumatic knee ;  
Out of the dust he picks your spray,  
Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

## XIV.

His coat is all ablaze with stars  
For deeds of martial daring ;  
His name, a watchword in the wars,  
Kept soldiers from despairing.

Now see beside his orders rare  
Your mignonette and maidenhair ;  
With just a nod you turn away,  
    Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

## XV.

You turn to meet the wintry face  
    Of an old beggar-woman,  
Just there beyond the railed-in space,  
    Brown, bony, hardly human ;  
Who in her tatters seems at least  
The skeleton of Egypt's feast ;  
A ghastly emblem of decay,  
    Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

## XVI.

With palsied head and shaking hand,  
    As if it were December,  
Grim by the barrier see her stand,  
    Just mumbling a " Remember !

Remember in thy days of lust,  
That fairest flesh must come to dust ;  
Then have some pity while you may,"  
Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

## XVII.

Why do you shiver at her glance,  
As if the wind blew chilly ?  
Why does your rosy countenance  
Turn pale as any lily ?  
The sun is warm, the sky is bright,  
The sea dissolving into light  
Breaks into blossom-bells of spray ;  
Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

## XVIII.

Ah, could some instinct in your breast  
Reveal that beggar's story,  
Would not your gay life lose its zest,  
Your empire lose its glory ?



Or would you only care to waste  
Life's bounty in yet hotter haste ?  
For is the world not beauty's prey ?  
    Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

XIX.

Alighting at the beggar's feet,  
    A bright Napoleon flashes !  
Then gaily through the dust and heat  
    Your light Victoria dashes.  
Again your face is rosy clear,  
As with a loud and ringing cheer  
They hail you winner of the day,  
    Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

XX.

And gloriously at set of sun,  
    In triumph now departing,  
The golden prize your flowers have won  
    Leaves rival bosoms smarting.

How many deem you half divine,  
Where amid bouquets you recline—  
Proud beauty in the devil's pay,  
Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

## XXI.

Down, down beneath the rolling wheels,  
The flowers, so fresh this morning,  
Lie trampled under careless heels,  
Vile stuff for all men's scorning.  
The roses crushed, the lilies soiled,  
The violets of their sweets despoiled,  
In dusty heaps defile your way,  
Jeanne Ray ! Jeanne Ray !

## *THE SONG OF THE WILLI.*

According to a widespread Hungarian superstition—showing the ingrained national passion for dancing—the Willi or Willis were the spirits of young affianced girls who, dying before marriage, could not rest in their graves. It was popularly believed that these phantoms would nightly haunt lonely heaths in the neighbourhood of their native villages till the disconsolate lovers came as if drawn by a magnetic charm. On their appearance the Willi would dance with them without intermission till they dropped dead from exhaustion.

### I.

THE wild wind is whistling o'er moorland and  
heather,

Heigh-ho, heigh-ho!

I rise from my bed, and my bed has no feather,

Heigh-ho!

My bed is deep down in the brown sullen mould,

My head is laid low on the clod ;

So wormy the sheets, and the pillow so cold,

Of clammy and moist clinging sod.

## II.

The lone livid moon rides alone high in heaven,

Heigh-ho, heigh-ho !

The stars' cutting glitter their dull shrouds hath  
riven,

Heigh-ho !

I rise and I glide out far into the night,

A shadow so swift and so still ;

Bleak, bleak is the moonshine all ghastly and  
white,

The dank morass drinketh its fill.

## III.

And down in yon valley in wan vapour shrinking,

Heigh-ho, heigh-ho !

The bare moated town cowers fitfully blinking,

Heigh-ho !

There, warm under shelter, the fire burning bright,

My lover sleeps sound in his bed ;

But I flit alone in the pitiless night,  
Unpitied, unloved, and unwed.

## IV.

And hast thou forgotten the deep troth we  
plighted?

Heigh-ho, heigh-ho!

Too warm was thy love by cold death to be  
blighted,

Heigh-ho!

My sweetheart! and mind'st thou that this is the  
night,

The night that we should have been wed?

And while I flit restless, a low wailing sprite,

Ah, say, canst thou sleep in thy bed?

## V.

A week, but a week, and a wreath of gay  
flowers,

Heigh-ho, heigh-ho!



## VII.

On, on whirled the pairs on the swift music driven,

Heigh-ho, heigh-ho !

Like gossamer vapours afloat in high heaven,

Heigh-ho !

Like gossamer vapours, in silence they fled,

With a shifting of face into face ;

But fleetier than all the fleet dancers we sped

In the rush of the rapturous race.

## VIII.

How often turned Wanda, the slim, lily-throated,

Heigh-ho, heigh-ho !

And gazed at us wistful as onward we floated,

Heigh-ho !

And Bilba, the swarthy, whose eyes had the trick

Of a stag's, with a glitter of steel ;

She lifted her lashes, so long and so thick,

To stare at my true love and leal.

## IX.

But he, he saw none o' them, brown-faced or rosy,  
Heigh-ho, heigh-ho !  
Tho' maidens bloomed bright like a fresh-gathered  
posy,  
Heigh-ho !  
For his eyes that shone black as the sloes of the  
hedges,  
They shone like two stars over me ;  
And his breath, thrilling o'er me as wind over  
sedges,  
Stirred my hair till I tingled with glee.

## X.

Now slow as two down-bosomed swans, we were  
sliding,  
Heigh-ho, heigh-ho !  
O'er the low heaving swell of the silver sounds  
gliding,  
Heigh-ho !



Now hollowly booming drums rumbled apace,  
    Flashed sharp clatt'ring cymbals around,  
And swung like loose leaves in a stormy embrace  
    We whirled in a tumult of sound.

## XI.

But pallid our cheeks grew, late flushing with  
    pleasure,

    Heigh-ho, heigh-ho !

As slowly away swooned the languishing measure,

    Heigh-ho !

For shrill crew the cock as the sun 'gan to rise,

    And it rang from afar like a knell ;

Our kisses grew bitter and sweet grew our sighs,

    As sadly we murmured, " Farewell ! "

## XII.

High up in the chambers the maidens together,

    O love, my love !

Were piling bleached linen as white as swan's  
feather

My love!

Were weaving and spinning and singing aloud,

While broidering my bride-veil of lace;

But the three fatal sisters they wove me my  
shroud,

And death kissed me cold on the face.

### XIII.

The wild wind is whistling o'er moorland and  
heather,

Heigh-ho, heigh-ho!

I rise from my bed, and my bed has no feather,

Heigh-ho!

The snow driveth grisly and ghostly, and gleams

In the glare of the moon's chilly glance;

What pale flitting phantoms aroused by her beams,

Are circling in shadowy dance!

## XIV.

Mayhap ye were maidens death plucked in your  
flower,

Heigh-ho, heigh-ho!

As clustering you glowed in love's murmuring  
bower,

Heigh-ho!

Who, delirious for life from the gloom of your  
graves,

Are driven to wander with me,

And you rise from your tombs like the white-  
crested waves

From the depths of the dolorous sea.

## XV.

Ah, maidens, pale maidens, o'er moorland and  
heather,

Heigh-ho, heigh-ho!

The bridegroom is coming athwart the wild  
weather,

Heigh-ho!

Full shines the fair moon on his beautiful face,  
He walketh like one in a trance ;  
Nay, is running like one who is running a race  
Against death, with his dead bride to dance.

## XVI.

At the sound of thy footfall my numb heart is  
shaken,

O love, my love !

Once again all its pulses to new life awaken,

My love !

It leaps like a stag that is borne as on wings

To the brooks thawing thick through the noon,  
Like a lark from the glebe, like a lily that springs  
From its bier to the bosom of June.

## XVII.

" I hold thee, I hold thee, I drink thy caresses,

O love, my love ! "

Round thy face, round thy throat, I roll my dank  
tresses,

My love !

“ I hold thee, I hold thee ! Eight nights, wan and  
weeping,”

I wandered loud sobbing thy name !

“ Thy lips are as cold as the snowdrift a-sweeping ;”

But thy breath soon shall fan them to flame !

XVIII.

Blow up for the dance now o'er moorland and  
heather !

Heigh-ho, heigh-ho !

Blow, blow you wild winds, while we two dance  
together,

Heigh-ho !

Till the clouds dance above with tempestuous  
embraces

Of maidenly moonbeams in flight ;

In the silvery rear of whose fugitive traces

Reel the stars through the revelling night !

## XIX.

“Cocks crow, and the breath on thy sweet lip is  
failing,

O love, my love!”

Stars swoon, and the flame in thy dark eye is  
quailing,

My love!

“Oh, brighter the night than the fires of the day”

When thine eyes shine as stars over me!

“Oh, sweeter thy grave than the soft breath of  
May!”

Then down, Love, to death, but with thee.

*SCHERZO.*

OII, beloved, come and bring  
All the flowery wealth of spring !  
Though the leaf be in the sere,  
Icy winter creeping near ;  
Though the trees like mourners all  
Standing at a funeral,  
Black against the pallid air  
Toss their wild arms in despair,  
With their bald heads sadly bowed  
O'er dead summer in her shroud.  
Yea, though golden days be o'er,  
If you enter at my door,  
Spring, dear spring, will come once more.  
There will break upon the night

That glad flash of dewy light  
Which, like young love in a pet,  
Once with sunny tears would wet  
Many a wild-wood violet ;  
And the hyacinth will arise  
In the April of your eyes.  
Blossoms of the apple tree ?  
Rarer blossoms bloom for me  
In the cunning white and red,  
Most felicitously wed,  
On your cheek. And then your brow—  
Can a snow-white cherry-bough  
Match its bland, unsullied hue,  
Where, like threads of silky blue,  
Little veins show here and there  
Through broad temples where your hair,  
Clustering, hangs a tender brown  
Softer than the fluffy down  
Which before the leaf in March  
Beards the lime tree and the larch ?



Shall I grieve because the rose,  
The red rose, no longer blows,  
Since all roses you eclipse  
With the roses of your lips?  
And what matter, O my sweet,  
Though the genial light and heat  
Have departed for a while!  
Only let me see you smile,  
Let me see that dulcet curve  
Like a dimpling wavelet swerve  
Round the coral of your mouth,  
And the North will change to South :  
To the happy South, whose clear  
Light o'er-brimming atmosphere,  
Flowing in at every pore,  
Sets life glowing to the core.  
You are light and life in sooth,  
Fair as was that Grecian youth  
Who in her cold sphere above  
Drove poor Dian mad with love—

When she saw him where he lay,  
White and golden like a spray  
Of tall jonquils whose intense  
Sweetness faints upon the sense ;  
When she saw him swathed in light,  
Couched on the ærial height  
Of hoar Latmos, hushed and warm ;  
While, to shield him from all harm,  
Like a woman's rounded arm,  
A fresh creeper wildly fair  
Twined around his throat and hair.  
And the goddess clean forgot  
Her fair fame without a blot,  
And untarnished reputation,  
Free from faintest imputation  
Of such frailties as the fair  
Dwellers in Elysian air  
Find recorded to their shame,  
Chronicled with date and name,  
In the annals of the skies.

She forgot in her surprise,  
When her empyrean eyes  
Saw Endymion where he lay  
Slumbering, and she cast away  
Her immortal honour, clear  
As her own unclouded sphere,  
For the palpitating bliss  
Of a surreptitious kiss.

Oh, beloved, come and bring  
All the flowery wealth of spring—  
All its blossoms, buds, and bells,  
And wind-coaxing violet smells—  
All its miracle of grace  
In the blossom of your face.



LYRICS.



*LOVE'S SOMNAMBULIST.*

LIKE some wild sleeper who alone at night  
Walks with unseeing eyes along a height,  
    With death below and only stars above ;  
I, in broad daylight, walk as if in sleep,  
Along the edges of life's perilous steep,  
    The lost somnambulist of love.

I, in broad day, go walking in a dream,  
Led on in safety by the starry gleam  
    Of thy blue eyes that hold my heart in thrall ;  
Let no one wake me rudely, lest one day,  
Startled to find how far I've gone astray,  
    I dash my life out in my fall.

*A MEETING.*

A TWILIGHT glow diffused on high  
Flushed all the autumn land beneath ;  
Like love that lights your azure eye,  
The pond's blue goblet on the heath  
Was brimful of the sky.

We met by chance, and heaven's rich hue  
Leaped to your face in rosy flame ;  
Ah, is it possible you knew  
The wild delight that filled my frame  
As I caught sight of you?



Ah, is it possible, my love,  
That your delight can equal mine?  
Nay, then, the burning sky above  
Grows pale beside this bliss divine,  
And the deep glow thereof.

*YOUR FACE.*

I TOOK your face into my dreams,  
It floated round me like a light ;  
Your beauty's consecrating beams  
Lay mirrored in my heart all night.  
As in a lonely mountain mere,  
Unvisited of any streams,  
Supremely bright and still and clear,  
The solitary moonlight gleams,  
Your face was shining in my dreams.

*ONLY A SMILE.*

No butterfly whose frugal fare  
Is breath of heliotrope and clove,  
And other trifles light as air,  
Could live on less than doth my love.

That childlike smile that comes and goes  
About your gracious lips and eyes,  
Hath all the sweetness of the rose,  
Which feeds the freckled butterflies.

I feed my love on smiles, and yet  
Sometimes I ask, with tears of woe,  
How had it been if we had met,  
If you had met me long ago,

Before the fast, defacing years

Had made all ill that once was well?

Ah, then your smiling breeds such tears

As Tantalus may weep in hell.

*SOMETIMES I WONDER.*

SOMETIMES I wonder if you guess  
The deep impassioned tenderness  
Which overflows my heart ;  
The love I never dare confess ;  
Yet hard, yea, harder to repress  
Than tears too fain to start.

Sometimes I ponder, O my sweet,  
The things I'll tell you when we meet ;  
But straightway at your sight  
My heart's blood oozes to my feet  
Like thawing waters in the heat,  
Confused with too much light.

I hardly know, when you are near,  
If it is love, or joy, or fear

Which fills my languid frame ;  
Enveloped in your atmosphere,  
My dark self seems to disappear,  
A moth entombed in flame.

*MANY WILL LOVE YOU.*

MANY will love you ; you were made for love ;  
For the soft plumage of the unruffled dove  
Is not so soft as your caressing eyes.  
You will love many ; for the winds that veer  
Are not more prone to shift their compass, dear,  
Than your quick fancy flies.

Many will love you ; but I may not, no ;  
Even though your smile sets all my life aglow,  
And at your fairness all my senses ache.  
You will love many ; but not me, my dear,  
Who have no gift to give you but a tear  
Sweet for your sweetness' sake.

*A DREAM.*

ONLY a dream, a beautiful baseless dream ;

Only a bright

Flash from your eyes, a brief electrical gleam,

Charged with delight.

Only a waking, alone, in the moon's last gleam

Fading from sight ;

Only a flooding of tears that shudder and stream

Fast through the night.



*ROSE D'AMOUR.*

I PLANTED a rose tree in my garden,  
In early days when the year was young ;  
I thought it would bear me roses, roses,  
While nights were dewy and days were long.

It bore but once, and a white rose only—  
A lovely rose with petals of light ;  
Like the moon in heaven, supreme and lonely ;  
And the lightning struck it one summer night.

## SONNET.

EVEN as on some black background full of night,  
And hollow storm in cloudy disarray,  
The forceful brush of some great master may  
More brilliantly evoke a higher light ;  
So beautiful, so delicately white,  
So like a very metaphor of May,  
Your loveliness on my life's sombre gray  
In its perfection stands out doubly bright.

And yet your beauty breeds a strange despair,  
And pang of yearning in the helpless heart,  
To shield you from time's fraying wear and tear  
That from yourself yourself would wrench apart ;  
How save you, fairest, but to set you where  
Mortality kills death in deathless art ?

*A PARTING.*

THE year is on the wing, my love,  
With tearful days and nights ;  
The clouds are on the wing above  
With gathering swallow-flights.

The year is on the wing, my sweet,  
And in the ghostly race,  
With patter of unnumbered feet,  
The dead leaves fly apace.

The year is on the wing, and shakes  
The last rose from its tree ;  
And I, whose heart in parting breaks,  
Must bid adieu to thee.

*MY LADY.*

LIKE putting forth upon a sea  
On which the moonbeams shimmer,  
Where reefs and unknown perils be  
To wreck, yea, wreck one utterly,  
It were to love you, lady fair,  
In whose black braids of billowy hair  
The misty moonstones glimmer.

Oh, misty moonstone-coloured eyes,  
Latticed behind long lashes,  
Within whose clouded orbs there lies,  
Like lightning in the sleeping skies,

A spark to kindle and ignite,  
And set a fire of love alight  
To burn one's heart to ashes.

I will not put forth on this deep  
Of perilous emotion ;  
No, though your hands be soft as sleep,  
They shall not have my heart to keep,  
Nor draw it to your fatal sphere.  
Lady, you are as much to fear  
As is the fickle ocean.

*ON A VIOLA D'AMORE.*

CARVED WITH A CUPID'S HEAD, AND PLAYED ON  
FOR THE FIRST TIME AFTER MORE THAN A  
CENTURY.

WHAT fairy music clear and light,  
Responsive to your fingers,  
Swells rippling on the summer night,  
And amorously lingers  
Upon the sense, as long ago  
In days of rouge and rococo !

A century of silence lay  
On strings that had not spoken  
Since powdered lords to ladies gay  
Gave, for a lover's token,

Fans glowing fresh from Watteau's art,  
Well worth a marchioness's heart.

Your dormant music tranced and bound  
Was like the Sleeping Beauty  
Prince Charming in the forest found,  
And kissed in loyal duty :  
And when she woke her eyes' blue fire  
Turned the dumb forest to a lyre.

Thus Amor with the bandaged eyes,  
Fit symbol of hushed numbers,  
Most musically wakes and sighs  
After an age of slumbers :  
Beneath your magic bow's control  
The Viol has regained her soul.

*A CHILD'S FANCY.*

"HUSH, hush! Speak softly, Mother dear,  
So that the daisies may not hear;  
For when the stars begin to peep,  
The pretty daisies go to sleep.

"See, Mother, round us on the lawn;  
With soft white lashes closely drawn,  
They've shut their eyes so golden-gay,  
That looked up through the long, long day.

"But now they're tired of all the fun—  
Of bees and birds, of wind and sun  
Playing their game at hide-and-seek;—  
Then very softly let us speak."



A myriad stars above the child  
Looked down from heaven and sweetly smiled ;  
But not a star in all the skies  
Beamed on him with his Mother's eyes.

She stroked his curly chestnut head,  
And whispering very softly, said,  
"I'd quite forgotten they might hear ;  
Thank you for that reminder, dear."

*LASSITUDE.*

I LAID me down beside the sea,  
Endless in blue monotony ;  
The clouds were anchored in the sky,  
Sometimes a sail went idling by.

Upon the shingles on the beach  
Gray linen was spread out to bleach,  
And gently with a gentle swell  
The languid ripples rose and fell.

A fisher-boy, in level line,  
Cast stone by stone into the brine :  
Methought I too might do as he,  
And cast my sorrows on the sea.

The old, old sorrows in a heap  
Dropped heavily into the deep ;  
But with its sorrow on that day  
My heart itself was cast away.

*SEEKING.*

IN many a shape and fleeting apparition,  
Sublime in age or with clear morning eyes,  
Ever I seek thee, tantalizing Vision,  
Which beckoning flies.

Ever I seek Thee, O evasive Presence,  
Which on the far horizon's utmost verge,  
Like some wild star in luminous evanescence,  
Shoots o'er the surge.

Ever I seek Thy features ever flying,  
Which ne'er beheld I never can forget :  
Lightning which flames through love, and mimics  
dying  
In souls that set.

Ever I seek Thee through all clouds of error ;

As when the moon behind earth's shadow slips,  
She wears a momentary mask of terror  
In brief eclipse.

Ever I seek Thee, passionately yearning ;

Like altar-fire on some forgotten fane,  
My life flames up irrevocably burning,  
And burnt in vain.

THE END.

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## WORKS BY MATHILDE BLIND.

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# OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

## THE PROPHECY OF SAINT ORAN,

### And other Poems.

"There is perhaps no phase of our history more capable of poetic treatment than the sainted lives of the Irish monks who first spread the Christian faith over the western shores of Scotland, and yet it would be difficult to point to a single representative poem having Saint Columba and the devoted band of his disciples for its heroes. An attempt at filling up this gap has recently been made by Miss Blind in a narrative poem devoted to the fate of St. Oran, the friend and disciple of St. Columba. . . . Apart from the sonorous beauty of her lines, there is in her diction a straightforwardness and simplicity, and an entire absence of affectation and false sentiment, which, combined with considerable power of characterization, make her volume a remarkable contribution to English literature."—*Times*, September 26, 1881.

"To disturb the *motif* of a legend is always a bold, and mostly a rash, proceeding. . . . And yet so skilfully is the story handled that the main incidents of the legend do not lose, but gain by this disturbance of the *motif*, and the character of Oran, which with the old *motif* could only have presented the single side of the religious enthusiast, becomes a character exhibiting that complexity which modern taste demands. . . . Directness of style and lucidity of narrative are the characteristic excellences of the poem. There are few contemporary poets who could have done so much dramatic business in so few lines. . . . In each of the sonnets there is a thought that is well expressed, and worth expressing."—*Athenæum*, July 30, 1881.

"It is in the domain of character that the poem is distinguished by its highest excellence. There is an ideal statuesqueness embodied in the person of St. Columba such as is felt to possess a powerful appeal to the imagination. The poem embraces many passions, of which the most tender and beautiful finds expression in the exquisite creation of the radiant golden-haired girl for whose love St. Oran breaks his vow of chastity. But the really powerful contribution to our knowledge of character which this book contains is fittingly centred in St. Oran himself. A dramatic instinct of high order finds utterance in his struggles between opposing passions. Nor are the metrical excellences of the poem less conspicuous. . . . If one were in need of some single phrase by which to denote the ultimate effect produced by this book, one might say that it seems the most *mature* of all recent first efforts, even of established rank."—*Academy*, July 16, 1881.

"In the choice of a subject for her chief poem she has been singularly fortunate. . . . That a story such as this is full of poetical suggestiveness is obvious, and Miss Blind has proved herself equal to the occasion. She has avoided writing anything approaching to a 'tendency poem.' She metes out justice with an equal hand to all her characters. The genuine enthusiasm and religious zeal of the monks are set forth in language as inspired as is the final protest of St. Oran against their narrow fanaticism; and one of the best passages in the book is indeed the Sermon in which St. Columba announces the Gospel of love and redemption to the islanders."—*Pall Mall Gazette*, August 22, 1881.

" 'The Prophecy of Saint Oran' is skilfully told and vigorously written. In the description of nature and scenery; in the delineation of character; and in the management of singularly difficult positions there is visible a firm and practised hand, a bold and unmistakable power. 'The Street Children's Dance' not unworthily ranks with some of the touching pieces of Hood, Mrs. Barrett Browning, and others."—*British Mail*, September 1, 1881.

"The only excuse for street music that can reasonably be considered valid is the touching plea for public toleration which is embodied in Miss Mathilde Blind's poem, wherein the spectacle of poor children dancing round an organ is as pathetically moralized and as tender and full of loving pity as Mrs. Browning's 'Cry of the Children.'"—*Daily Telegraph*, September 1, 1881.

"The poem is rich in true description of sea and sky and mountain, and glows in sympathy with the deeper feelings which stir humanity. There has been published no poem of such creative suggestiveness as this for many a day, and we hope and believe that it is the precursor of other work by the same unflinching hand. This poem is a true work of art, complete and beautiful. There is in the volume other work which shows a master's touch. . . ."—*Manchester Examiner and Times*, July 1, 1882.

"Il y a là bien plus qu'une simple facilité de versification. Le récit du poème d'ouverture est grand et fort, la manière de raconter est pleine de poésie et d'effet. Depuis la mort de Mrs. Barrett Browning, nous n'avons point eu de poésie aussi hautement inspirée qui ait jailli d'une source féminine."—*Le Livre*, Paris, October 10, 1881.

## THE HEATHER ON FIRE:

### A Tale of the Highland Clearances.

"Miss Blind has produced one of the most noticeable and moving poems which recent years have added to our shelves. . . . As a singer with a message her attempt is praiseworthy, and her performance is fairly self-consistent. It is eminently homogeneous; the passion once felt, the inspiration once obeyed, the well-head pours forth its stream in a strong and uniform current, which knows no pause until its impulse ceases. . . . The story is pathetic at once in its simplicity and in its terror. . . . We congratulate the author upon her boldness in choosing a subject of our own time, fertile in what is pathetic, and free from any taint of the vulgar and conventional. Poetry of late years has tended too much towards motives of a merely fanciful and abstruse, sometimes a plainly artificial, character; and we have had much of lyrical energy or attraction, with little of the real marrow of human life, the flesh and blood of man and woman. Positive subject-matter, the emotion which inheres in actual life, the very smile and the very tear and heart-pang, are, after all, precious to poetry, and we have them here. 'The Heather on Fire' may possibly prove to be something of a new departure, and one that was certainly not superfluous."—*Athenæum*, July 17, 1886.

"Miss Blind has chosen for her new poem one of those terrible Highland clearances which stain the history of Scotch landlordism. Though her tale is a fiction it is too well founded on fact. . . . It may be said generally of the poem that the most difficult scenes are those in which Miss Blind succeeds best; and on the whole we are inclined to think that its greatest and most surprising success is the picture of the poor old soldier Rory driven mad by the burning of his wife. In his frenzy he mixes up his old battles with the French and the descent of the landlord's ejectors upon the village."—*Academy*, August 7, 1886.

"In this versified tale of Highland clearances, Mathilde Blind has, with genuine poetic instinct, selected a family the fortunes of which form the burden of her story. . . . Literature and poetry are never seen at their best save in contact with actual life. . . . This little book abounds in vivid delineation of character, and is redolent with the noblest human sympathy."—*Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, June 3, 1886.

"A subject which has painfully preoccupied public opinion is, in the poem entitled 'The Heather on Fire,' treated with characteristic power by Miss Mathilde Blind. Irish evictions have offered so convenient a theme to party strife, that the sufferings of the unhappy Highland crofters have not always met with the compassion they were so well calculated to inspire. In eloquent and forcible verse, Miss Blind tells the tale of their wrongs, their resistance to the hard fate imposed upon them, and describes the bitter grief with which

'Crowding on the decks with hungry eyes,  
Straining toward the coast that flies and flies,'

those among them driven into exile look on the shores to which many bid an eternal farewell. Both as a narrative and descriptive poem 'The Heather on Fire' is equally remarkable."—*Morning Post*, July 30, 1886.

"We are happy in being able to extend to the present poem a welcome equally sincere and equally hearty; for it is a poem that is rich not only in power and beauty but in that 'enthusiasm of humanity' which stirs and moves us, and of which so much contemporary verse is almost painfully deficient. Miss Blind does not possess her theme; she is possessed by it, as was Mrs. Browning when she wrote 'Aurora Leigh.' . . . We can best describe the kind of her success by noting the fact that while engaged in the perusal of her book we do not say, 'What a fine poem!' but 'What a terrible story!' or, more probably still, say nothing at all, but read on and on under the spell of a great horror and an overpowering pity. Poetry of which this can be said needs no other recommendation, and, therefore, we need not unduly lengthen our review of 'The Heather on Fire.'"—*Manchester Examiner and Times*, September 1, 1886.

"There are charming pictures of West Highland scenery, in Arran apparently, and of the surroundings and conditions of Highland cottar life."—*Scotsman*, July 20, 1886.

"In 'The Heather on Fire' she exhibits a clearness and beauty of diction, a rhythmical correctness, a grace and simplicity of style which mark her out as no slavish follower of any poetic 'school,' but an unaffected and truthful expression of her own feelings. . . . Whatever the reader's opinion may be on the grievance which Miss Blind throws into such fierce light, he cannot fail to be pleased with her graceful tale, so gracefully and simply told."—*Glasgow Herald*, July 20, 1886.

"Miss Mathilde Blind's poem is the tragic epic of the old evictions in the Highlands of Scotland. It is a strange fact that the general reader knows more about the siege of Troy, the Norman Conquest, and the Wars of the Roses, than about such matters in the very history of our own days as the depopulation of the Highlands of Scotland by the landlords. The old story comes to the front just now by reason of the crofter agitation. In the preface to her fine and touching epic, and in the notes at the end, Miss Blind passes in review some of the facts of the eviction of the Glen Sannox people by the Duke of Hamilton in 1832, where, as she says, 'the progress of civilization, which has redeemed many a wilderness and gladdened the solitary places of the world, has come with a curse to these Highland glens, and turned green pastures and golden harvest fields once more into a desert.' The 'Heather on Fire' is a poem in four cantos—or 'Duans'—comprising about two hundred stanzas."—*School Board Chronicle*, July 10, 1886.

"It is written in a strain which must of necessity appeal to the sympathies of all grades of society, and at the same time it is eminently poetical, both in thought and rhythm."—*Western Antiquary*, August, 1886.

"A book like this forms an admirable corrective to the harsh and cold-blooded theories of such landlords as the Duke of Argyle on the rights of his class."—*Cambridge Independent Press*, August, 1886.

"There is a sonorous beauty, a classic dignity and depth of pathos throughout her four cantos, and a vivid and thrilling description is given of the industrious hamlets, the contented happy people, and the ruthless manner in which the evictions were effected by the stewards and ground-officers."—*Elgin Courier*, August, 1886.

## TARANTELLA:

### A Romance.

"The author of this two-volumed romance is favourably known by other works, and by her appreciative 'Life of George Eliot.' The strange effects of the bite of a tarantula spider, so firmly believed in by the Italian peasantry, and the marvellous power of musical enthusiasm, supply the motive of the story; and the characters are portrayed with great force, pathos, and a touch of homely humour."—*Bookseller*, Christmas, 1884.

"Miss Blind may be congratulated on 'Tarantella,' her first novel. In the *résumé* (as we have called it) of the musician, Emanuel Sturm, nearly all the interest of the book is concentrated. The violinist, poor and unknown, finds himself at Capri. Accident brings him, one evening, to a frightened group of women, one of whom has just been bitten by the tarantula, and, according to the popular superstition, he is implored to play, in order to drive the poison out of her. He refuses at first, but afterwards consents, and, finding himself almost supernaturally inspired, plays an improvised 'Tarantella' throughout a whole stormy night, finally curing the girl. The tune thus strangely hit on spreads, and ultimately makes him famous, but the love he has conceived for his Antonella brings him almost as much misery as his music brings him fame."—*Pall Mall Gazette*, February 5, 1885.

"Admiration of the delicate sketching now in vogue should not blind us to the very opposite kind of charm of which 'Tarantella' is full. Entirely poetical in conception (save that it is not written in metre), 'Tarantella' is more essentially a poem than many a narrative written in smooth and elegant verse. . . . 'Tarantella' is indeed full of strange originality and scenic effects of uncommon powers. The dance among the ruins is not likely to be soon forgotten by the most unimaginative of readers, and it is rarely, we think, that in an English novel the psychology of the poetic temperament has been touched by a hand so delicate and at the same time so strong."—*Athenæum*, January 17, 1885.

"There is abundant imagination, and the language is generally fresh and vigorous. . . . The author finds many opportunities of introducing scenes from German life, which are evidently written with intimate knowledge. . . . This is distinctly a novel to read."—*Echo*, June 16, 1886.

"This powerful and pathetic tale has carried us more completely out of ourselves and along with it than any work of fiction we have read for many a day. . . . Her (Miss Blind's) word-pictures glow with rich local colours; she is a complete mistress of the art of dramatic cause and effect. When once fairly under weigh, she never allows the interest to flag for a single moment. Thus it is only when we have laid down the final volume that we have time or inclination to

pause and recognize the care and art which have contributed to this triumphant result; to turn back . . . and dwell on the author's extraordinary knowledge of the human heart—extraordinary alike for its depth and its range. As for the wit and humour with which the book is freely sprinkled, the poetic and artistic spirit which pervades it throughout, they can only be appreciated on a second or a third perusal.”—*Life*, December 25, 1884.

“‘Tarantella’ is extremely clever, and the treatment of the weird subject she has chosen picturesque in the extreme. The local colouring is especially fine and her character studies extremely strong. Thrice welcome in its two-volume form, ‘Tarantella’ is a book bound to make its mark.”—*Whitehall Review*, December 11, 1884.

“We have very ingenious resources in music and the bite of the tarantula, which alone music is said to heal. Notwithstanding the sense of improbability, we follow the strange fortunes of Antonella Countess Ogotska, and her almost magical transformation with interest. Mina, the innocent girl, her friend, is well delineated, and Emanuel Sturm, the wonderful violinist and composer, for whose portrait Paganini has doubtless been available, is original, no less than his friend the painter.”—*British Quarterly*, January, 1885.

“‘Tarantella’ is a very clever story, with plenty of action and not without tragic incidents. The author has also plenty of humour, and there is at least as much light as shade in the book. Mina is not less delightful than the Countess is objectionable, in spite of her beauty and her daring.”—*London Figaro*, November 20, 1886.

“We shall not spoil the story by hinting at its *dénouement*. It is a deeply interesting one; and the characters, three of them at least, are sufficiently original to give the author a high rank as a novelist. . . . The book abounds in striking and interesting pictures of Italian and German life and scenery.”—*Dublin Mail*, November, 1886.

“‘Tarantella’ is, indeed, a novel unlike the common—full of power and imagination and originality. . . . It would be unjust to deny to this very remarkable book a large share of what the world calls genius.”—*Melbourne Argus*, March 14, 1885.

“By her recent works, ‘The Prophecy of Saint Oran’ and the ‘Life of George Eliot,’ Miss Blind brought herself before the public as a writer of considerable ability, and her latest novel will do much to increase her reputation. . . . ‘Tarantella’ deserves to be classed among the best novels of the present day.”—*Scottish News*, June 15, 1886.

“There is an inherent charm about ‘Tarantella’ which will be apparent to the reader from a perusal of the first chapter. This agreeable quality does not end there, however. The whole of the tale, which is divided into forty-six chapters, is permeated with features of an exceptionally attractive description. Not the least noteworthy character of the story is its novelty. Most of the incidents, which are carefully elaborated and follow in logical sequence, are conspicuous for an airy freshness in nature and treatment. Every chapter has its specific purpose, there being a uniform overflow of idea and sentiment; and each development of the pleasing romance opens to the mental vision of the thoughtful reader incidents of a more or less engrossing description. Continental scenes and customs are described with freedom and perspicuity, and the varied and eventful adventures of the principal characters—pleasingly typical, it may be mentioned, of the romanticism invariably associated with ‘love’s young dream,’ when, as in the present instance, there is a combination of youth and beauty—are recorded with a poetical fervour and gracefulness of diction which are certain to be generally admired.”—*Western Daily Press*, June 2, 1886.

## THE ASCENT OF MAN:

### Poems.

"Miss Blind traces the 'Ascent of Man' through successive stages, until first love, and then sorrow—which is love under another guise—lead us to the highest conception of human life we can hope to reach. It is a brave, sad, glorious story, told with inimitable skill, and as only a poet who knows man's heart, with its hopes, doubts, fears, aspirations, could possibly tell it. . . . The other poems in the volume are as excellent in their kind as those which give a title to it. The only difference between them is that one series is rich with human experience, and with the results of knowledge and of high thinking, while the other is all aglow with the fresh delights of the out-door world. These delights find an almost perfect expression. . . . A reviewer who is so fortunate as to light on a book like this, lays it down with regret, and fears that he has not said of it all that it deserves should be said. That is my feeling; and, lest I should have omitted any note of praise that ought to be sounded, I should like to add, by way of suggestion to all lovers of poetry—and I hope they are still many—that here is truly a book that is worth the loving."—*Academy*, June 15, 1889.

"The effort which Miss Blind has made is one deserving of high praise. From Chaos to Kosmos she hurries her reader along, breathless and perspiring perhaps, but never anxious to stop. We have known her book to be read on the Underground Railway, and the reader to be so absorbed in its contents as to be carried unawares several stations past his destination. . . . Miss Blind's gift of song is genuine, and her imagination powerful. . . . When all is said and done, 'The Ascent of Man' remains a remarkable poem, and cannot fail to increase its author's reputation as a brilliant and original writer."—*Athenæum*, July 20, 1889.

"There is a fine elevation of tone, and there is a splendid mastery of diction, well sustained from the beginning to the end. . . . The poems are unquestionably very beautiful."—*School Board Chronicle*, June 8, 1889.

"Miss Blind has already a place of honour among poets, and this striking volume will make it sure. There is nothing weak or unreal about her verse, and there is much force of thought, sympathy for all, and burning scorn of luxurious vice."—*Liverpool Mercury*, June 19, 1889.

"One of the advanced minds of the day is Mathilde Blind. I have at my side her latest book, 'The Ascent of Man.' The poems are all earnest and high pitched in tone—they are human. . . . Every line comes from a heart full of life's unutterable woes, of hope's faint, half-believing monitions."—*Cheltenham Examiner*, June 19, 1889.

"To Miss Blind belongs the honour of having been the first to seriously render Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer into verse on anything like a bold and comprehensive scale. 'The Ascent of Man' is a really remarkable poem. Its main conception is even noble, its manner of execution is brilliant and vigorous, and it abounds in passages which prove Miss Blind to possess the true poetic faculty."—*Wit and Wisdom*, August 3, 1889.

"In her last published volume of poems, 'The Ascent of Man,' Miss Blind has revealed qualities of imagination, enthusiasm, and strength, which place her high indeed among women writers of the day."—*Echo*, August 8, 1889.

"Miss Blind has already proved herself to be no ordinary writer of verse, and her new volume will add to her reputation. 'The Ascent of Man' is a philosophical poem, challenging comparison by its subject with the great work of Lucretius, and inevitably suggesting some of the finest passages of Tennyson."—*Manchester Examiner*, May 18, 1889.

"That Miss Blind's volume shows signs of poetic power no careful reader can for a moment doubt."—*Literary World*, June 14, 1889.

"Miss Blind is an accomplished authoress, and a verse-maker of remarkable skill. There is plenty of suggestion, as well as a good deal of brilliant, forcible, and easy colouring, in 'The Ascent of Man.'"—*Star*, June 17, 1889.

"This is a powerful but unequal poem: but the task set to herself by the author was such a mighty one, that, even had her success been far less than it is, she might well be proud. . . . This volume will considerably enhance Miss Blind's reputation as a poetess."—*Lady's Pictorial*, June 28, 1889.

"There are some fine passages, elevated in conception and felicitous in expression. . . . The volume, as a whole, is a considerable advance on Miss Blind's previous poetic work, and should give much pleasure to all thoughtful and cultivated readers."—*Globe*, May 22, 1889.

"The chief merit of this fine poem is that it treats from the transcendental point of view certain conceptions and theories of life which modern science has shown us under another aspect."—*St. James's Gazette*, June 19, 1889.

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